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SUBJECT: ADHAMIYA SUNNIS DISCUSS SECURITY, VIEWS ON U.S.

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Robert Gilchrist for reasons
1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C) Summary: Sunni members of the Adhamiya District Council (DC) told PRToffs June 5 that the Iraqi Army (IA) and both Sunni and Shia extremists are the primary sources of instability in the predominantly Sunni areas of the district. They added that many average Sunni citizens in the district resent the U.S. because of what they view as its unconditional support for the pro-Iranian Shia central government. Several DC members said that the security wall in Adhamiya has not improved security because IA personnel manning the checkpoint allow Shia militiamen to enter, but one said the wall has improved security conditions and he would like it to be extended to surround his own neighborhood. Several DC members complained that the Baghdad Security Plan has not done enough to target Shia militias. End summary.

IA, Sunni and Shia Extremists Threaten Adhamiya Security

12. (C) DC members told PRToffs that the Iraqi Army, as well as both Sunni and Shia extremists, threaten security in Adhamiya. DC Chairman Dawood Al-Adhamy, a Sunni, and several of his Sunni associates told PRToff that the Iraqi Army is the primary source of instability in the district, predominantly Sunni areas. Al-Adhamy and his associates claimed the IA routinely mistreats Sunni residents because most of the soldiers are Shia and many of them belong to militias.⁸ They said that, in their view, the security situation in Adhamiya, Sunni areas has deteriorated since the beginning of the BSP because the IA has cracked down especially hard on the Sunni populace and citizens are hitting back. They said that the IA has failed to distinguish between militants and average citizens and thus many innocent Sunnis who were once neutral now at least passively support insurgent activity.

13. (C) Al-Adhamy and his associates claimed the Iraqi Army kills one or two innocent civilians per day in the district, predominantly Sunni areas. He added that usually such incidents occur when the army indiscriminately retaliates for attacks by opening fire in the general direction from which the soldiers believe they were attacked. (Comment: While there is no direct evidence of these events, Al-Adhamy and his associates clearly believe this to be true, therefore perpetuating their mistrust of the Iraqi Army.)

14. (C) Al-Adhamy claimed the Iraqi Army routinely carries out mass arrests of military-age Sunni males and that detainees often disappear because the soldiers who have arrested them are Shia militiamen. He said that his constituents would much rather be arrested by U.S. forces because at least they know they will not be mistreated, executed, ransomed, or handed over to Shia militia or death squads.

15. (C) DC member Omar Rahmani, a secular Sunni, said Adhamiya is caught in the middle of a war between Sunni and Shia

extremists. Rahmani said he fears that he might be targeted by either Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) militants or Al-Qaeda-linked Sunni fighters. Rahmani claimed that security threats severely restrict his movement around the city and that for security reasons he refuses to travel north of Antar Square, a major landmark in Adhamiya a few blocks from his home. He added that he fears he might be killed by extremists or skittish residents who are so afraid that they will kill anyone unfamiliar entering their neighborhood.

¶16. (C) Rahmani said that both Al-Qaeda and JAM are openly recruiting for new members in Adhamiya. Current JAM salaries are about \$300 a month, according to the word on the street. Rahmani said that the U.S should stop treating these groups as competing ideologies, and instead view them as competing businesses. He added that sectarian violence is merely a tool rival parties use to gain more power over city services and the lucrative contracts handed out by the Amanat (City Hall), and to create an environment where profitable extortion and kidnapping rings can be maintained.

Security Wall in Sunni Area Gets Mixed Reviews

¶17. (C) Al-Adhamy and his associates claimed that most Sunni residents living inside the wall want it taken down because it has not improved security and unnecessarily slows the transport of people and goods into the area. He said that residents sometimes have to wait for several hours to get into the walled area and are often harassed by IA personnel manning the checkpoint. Al-Adhamy and his associates said some IA personnel knowingly let militiamen enter. In a separate meeting, Rahmani told another PRToff that he thinks the wall has improved security and that he would like to see

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his neighborhood, Wazariya, surrounded by barriers.

¶18. (C) Al-Adhamy and his associates said that IA personnel sometimes antagonize residents by preventing fuel shipments into the area, unnecessarily slowing the entry of perishable goods, and destroying merchandise while searching shipments. They added that &even Israel treats the Palestinians better than the Iraqi Army treats the Sunnis.8

Iraqi Army Undermines Services in Sunni Areas

¶19. (C) Al-Adhamy and his associates claimed that the Iraqi Army deliberately undermines services in Adhamiya,s Sunni areas as a means of collective punishment in the aftermath of attacks. He said that on June 4 the IA went to the power station that serves the Sunni area and ordered it shut down for the day to punish residents for the deaths of four Iraqi soldiers in an attack. He added that the shut-down made little difference since the area only gets an average of one or two hours of electricity per day. Al-Adhamy and his associates also said that soldiers routinely open fire on electricity transformers in neighborhoods after attacks to punish what they see as complicit residents.

¶110. (C) Al-Adhamy and his associates claimed that IA personnel manning the checkpoint to the walled area sometimes prevent garbage trucks from leaving the area and order the drivers to
&let the Sunnis live in their filth.8

Adhamiya Sunnis Resent U.S. Support for Shia Government

¶111. (C) Al-Adhamy and his associates said many of Adhamiya,s Sunni residents have a negative view of the U.S. because of what they called its &unconditional support for a pro-Iranian Shia government of thieves and sectarian killers.8 He said that most residents say U.S. troops in the area behave professionally and fairly and that they would

rather have U.S. troops deployed in the area than Iraqi troops. However, they said, average Sunnis distrust the U.S. because they do not understand why it supports what they see as a sectarian government openly hostile to them. Rahmani said that Iraq's ruling political parties cause the sectarian divide and that the U.S cannot expect reconciliation while supporting a process that empowers religious parties and their armed supporters. (Comment: Both Sunni and Shia moderates regularly ask PRToffs why the U.S. does not provide more support to secularists and moderates committed to liberal democracy. They add that such people cannot seriously compete in local or national elections against religious parties, which have their own militias receive hefty financial assistance from Iran and other neighboring countries. End comment.)

¶12. (C) Al-Adhamy said that Sunnis would like to see the U.S. apply more pressure on the Iraqi government on issues such as corruption and militia infiltration of security forces. He said it undermines U.S. credibility when the U.S. claims to stand for representative government and human rights when average citizens see the U.S. supporting an Iraqi government whose officials embezzle public funds and run militias that torture and kill civilians.

¶13. (C) When asked if average Sunnis in Adhamiya favor continued U.S. military presence in Iraq, Al-Adhamy and his associates said average Sunnis are about evenly divided between two camps; the first wants the U.S. to leave and is willing to use force to drive U.S. troops out. The second, he said, wants the U.S. to stay in order to prevent the predominantly Shia government from slaughtering the Sunnis and to curb growing Iranian influence in Iraq. He said that within this camp, Sunnis say that if the U.S. will not crack down on Shia militias, particularly JAM, U.S. forces might as well leave now.

Iraqi Politics and Elections

¶14. (C) Rahmani said Baghdad's political future is bleak, due in part to entrenched sectarianism. Rahmani, who has been a district council member since 2003 and was a member of the disbanded Baghdad City Council, said he is committed to public service, but that secular technocrats like him have never had a chance to contribute to rebuilding Iraq. He said that provincial and national elections held in 2005 put into office a cadre of &foreigners who are largely pushing an agenda developed in Tehran.⁸ He said that religious parties with armed wings dominate Iraqi politics and are likely to continue doing so.

¶15. (C) Rahmani said that &Shia zealots who are

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unaccountable to the citizens of Baghdad⁸ will likely win the next round of provincial elections. He added that even though he is a Sunni, he would never vote for any of the Tawafuq (Sunni coalition) parties because they do not represent his secular viewpoint. He added that Iyad Allawi and other prominent secularists have proven themselves corrupt. Rahmani said he would prefer to see the next Provincial Council chosen from the membership of current District Councils, as was done in 2004.

¶16. (C) Comment: PRToffs have been dealing with Rahmani for more than two years and he has steadily become more pessimistic about the prospects for stability and reconciliation since religious parties swept 2005 elections. Whether or not the DC members, claims about the IA and JAM elements are true, the DC members believe that they are and perceive both the IA and JAM as threats to their community. These perceptions apparently perpetuate their feelings of insecurity. End comment.

¶17. (C) Bio Notes: Al-Adhamy has been acting chairman of the

Adhamiya DC since the murder of the former chairman earlier this year. He deals regularly with U.S. forces in Adhamiya and has met periodically with the Baghdad PRT. Rahmani is a secular Sunni who has been a DC member since the council was formed. He is the former chairman of the now disbanded city council and is a long standing contact of the PRT. Both men are known as moderates within their communities and both are among Baghdad PRT,s most cooperative and candid contacts.

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